

A Chaparral Christmas Gift

By O. Henry



THE original cause of the trouble was about twenty years in growing. At the end of that time it was worth it.

Had you lived anywhere within 50 miles of Sundown ranch you would have heard of it. It possessed a quantity of jet black hair, a pair of extremely frank, deep brown eyes and a laugh that rippled across the prairie like the sound of a hidden brook. The name of it was Rosita McMullen; and she was the daughter of old man McMullen of the Sundown sheep ranch.

There came riding on red rose steeds—or, to be more explicit, on a paint and a flea-bitten sorrel—two woodcocks. One was Madison Lane and the other was the Frio Kid. But at that time they did not call him the Frio Kid, for he had not earned the honors of special nomenclature. His name was simply Johnny McRoy.

It must not be supposed that these two were the sum of the agreeable Rosita's admirers. The branches of a dozen others championed their bits at the long hitching rack of the Sundown ranch. Many were the sheepherders that did not belong to the flocks of Dan McMullen. But of all the cavaliers Madison Lane and Johnny McRoy galloped far ahead, wherefore they are to be chronicled.

Madison Lane, a young cattleman from the Nueces country, won the race. He and Rosita were married one Christmas day. Armed, hilarious, vociferous, magnanimous, the cowmen and the sheepmen, laying aside their hereditary hatred, joined forces to celebrate the occasion.

But while the wedding feast was at its liveliest there descended upon it Johnny McRoy, bitten by jealousy, like one possessed.

"I'll give you a Christmas present," he yelled, shrilly, at the door, with his 45 in his hand. Even then he had some reputation as an offhand shot.

His first bullet cut a neat underbit in Madison Lane's right ear. The barrel of his gun moved an inch. The next shot would have been the bride's, had not Carson, a sheepman, possessed a mind with triggers somewhat well oiled and in repair. The guns of the wedding party had been hung, in their belts, upon nails in the wall when they sat at table, as a concession to good taste. But Carson, with great promptness, hurled his plate of roast venison and trifles at McRoy, spilling his aim. The second bullet, then, only shattered the white petals of a Spanish dagger flower suspended two feet above Rosita's head.

The guests spurned their chairs and jumped for their weapons. It was considered an improper act to shoot the bride and groom at a wedding. In about six seconds there were twenty or so bullets due to be whizzing in the direction of Mr. McRoy.

"I'll shoot better next time," yelled Johnny; "and there'll be a next time." He backed rapidly out the door.

The cattleman swept out upon him, calling for vengeance.

But the sortie failed in its vengeance. McRoy was on his horse and away, shouting back curses and threats as he galloped into the concealing chaparral.

That night was the birthnight of the Frio Kid. He became the "bad man" of that portion of the state. The rejection of his suit by Miss McMullen turned him to a dangerous man. When officers went after him for the shooting of Carson, he killed two of them, and entered upon the life of an outlaw. When he was, at last shot and killed by a little one-armed Mexican who was nearly dead himself from fright, the Frio Kid had the deaths of 13 men on his head.

Many tales are told along the border of his impudent courage and daring. But he was not one of the breed of desperadoes who have seasons of generosity and even of softness. They say he never had mercy on the object of his anger. Yet at this and every Christmas he is well to give each one credit. If it can be done, for whatever speak of good he may have possessed. If the Frio Kid ever did a kindly act or felt a throb of generosity in his heart it was once at such a time and season, and this is the way it happened:

One December in the Frio country rode the Frio Kid and his Satellite and co-murderer, Mexican Frank. The Kid reined in his mustang, and sat in his saddle, thoughtful and grim, with dangerously narrowing eyes.

"I don't know what I been thinking about, Mex," he remarked in his usual mild drawl, "to have forgot all about a

Christmas present I got to give. I'm going to ride over tomorrow night and shoot Madison Lane in his own house. He got my girl—Rosita would have had me if he hadn't cut into the game. I wonder why I happened to overlook it up to now?"

"Ah, shucks, Kid," said Mexican, "don't talk foolishness. You know you can't get within a mile of Mad Lane's house tomorrow night. I see old man Allen day before yesterday, and he says Mad is going to have Christmas doings at his house. You remember how you shot up the festivities when Mad was married, and about the threats you made? Don't you suppose Mad Lane'll kind of keep his eye open for a certain Mr. Kid? You plumb make me tired, Kid, with such remarks."

"I'm going," repeated the Frio Kid, without heat, "to go to Madison Lane's Christmas doings, and kill him. I ought to have done it a long time ago."

"There's other ways of committing suicide," advised Mexican. "Why don't you go and surrender to the sheriff?"

"I'll get him," said the Kid. Christmas eve, fell as balmy as April. Perhaps there was a hint of far-away frostiness in the air, but it tingled like seltzer, perfumed faintly with late prairie blossoms and the mesquite grass.

When night came the five or six rooms of the ranch house were brightly lit. In one room was a Christmas tree, for the Lanes had a boy of three, and a dozen or more guests were expected from the nearer ranches.

The guests had arrived in buckboards and on horseback, and were making themselves comfortable inside. The evening went along pleasantly. The guests enjoyed and praised Rosita's excellent supper, and afterward the men scattered in groups about the rooms or on the broad "gallery," smoking and chatting.

The Christmas tree, of course, delighted the youngsters, and above all were they pleased when Santa Claus himself in magnificent white beard and furs appeared and began to distribute the toys.

"It's my papa," announced Billy Sampson, aged six.

Berky, a sheepman, an old friend of Lane, stopped Rosita as she was passing by him on the gallery.

"Well, Mrs. Lane," said he, "I suppose by this Christmas you've gotten over being afraid of that fellow Mc-



"Oh, Thank You!"

Roy, haven't you? Madison and I have talked about it, you know."

"Very nearly," said Rosita, smiling. "But I am still nervous sometimes. I shall never forget that awful time when he came so near killing us."

"He's the most cold-hearted villain in the world," said Berky. "The cattle men all along the border ought to turn out and hunt him down like a wolf."

"He has committed awful crimes," said Rosita, "but I—don't—know. I think there is a spot of good somewhere in everybody. He was not always bad—that I know."

Rosita turned into the hallway between the rooms. Santa Claus, in muffling whiskers and furs, was just coming through.

"I heard what you said through the window, Mrs. Lane," he said. "I was just going down in my pocket for a Christmas present for your husband. But I've left one for you, instead. It's in the room to your right."

"Oh, thank you, kind Santa Claus," said Rosita, brightly.

Rosita went into the room, while Santa Claus stepped into the cooler air of the yard.

She found no one in the room but Madison.

"Where is my present that Santa said he left for me in here?" she asked.

"Haven't seen anything in the way of a present," said her husband, laughing. "Unless he could have meant me."

The next day Gabriel Radd, the foreman of the X O ranch, dropped into the post office at Loma Alta.

"Well, the Frio Kid's got his dose of lead at last," he remarked to the postmaster.

"That so? How'd it happen?"

"One of old Sanchez's Mexican sheep herders did it—I think of it! The Frio Kid killed by a sheep herder! The Greaser saw him riding along past his camp about twelve o'clock last night, and was so skeered that he up with a Winchester and let him have it. Funniest part of it was that the Kid was dressed all up with white Angora-skin whiskers and a regular Santa Claus rig-out from head to foot. Think of the Frio Kid playing Santa!"

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Rhymo the Monk

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TUCUMCARI, FASTEST GROWING TOWN IN SOUTHWEST, TO CELEBRATE SOON

Tucumcari, N. M., Dec. 16.—A movement has lately developed in Tucumcari to celebrate this spring the tenth anniversary in the life of the city.

Tucumcari was not yet born when the 1900 census was taken, and this region in which a thriving city of nearly 5,000 souls has so lately sprung, was, up to the time of the coming of the Rock Island railway, an almost inaccessible wilderness.

The first tent was pitched on the present site of Tucumcari about ten years ago today, J. A. Street being the first resident of the new town. The townsite company was composed of J. A. Street, A. D. Goldenberg, Jacob Wertheim and Lee K. Smith. The Rock Island road was then building into the site, although the first passenger train was not run until March 12, 1902. John Pace was elected the first mayor of the place. Incorporation as a city did not take place until 1905, city incorporation following in 1905.

This site was not thought of as a location for a town until the railway headed this way. The United States government had established Fort Bascom on a site 12 miles north of Tucumcari, on the bank of the Canadian river, four miles west of what is now known as Dripping Springs. The fort was made necessary by the frequent depredations of the Indians who infested this region at that time.

A story is told of one adventurous party, a woman being included, who missed being wholly annihilated by a more accident only. Camping for a night at a water hole some 35 miles north of the fort, some renegade Indian guides stole one of the three teams of horses and got away with them before the loss was discovered at daybreak.

As the team was badly needed to continue the journey, the woman was left with two of the men and the

other teams with instructions to await the return of the rest of the party, who started out in search of the missing team.

A short time after the departure, an old western guide and rancher appeared upon the scene. Learning of the predicament to which the party was placed and knowing the danger to which continued delay in those parts would subject them, he volunteered to help search for the stolen animals.

True to his belief he came upon the renegade pair a few miles from the scene at another watering place, and, single handed, drove them off and recovered the horses. Previous experiences with him seemed to have given the Indians a wholesome fear of the man. He advised the party to hastily harness one of the teams and set out for Las Vegas, as he feared that the escaped thieves might soon return with a body of Indians to seek revenge. Two of the male members of the party remained behind with the rest of the equipment to await the return of the men who had gone out after the horses.

When the disappointed searchers returned, a couple of hours later to the site of the camp, they found only the lifeless bodies of the two men who had remained behind. One of the lifeless victims had been scalped.

Under the stern hand of the government, the Indians gradually disappeared. Settlements began to spring up throughout the country. Where the savages had been, the civilized hostlers came. Wandering bands of ruffians and outlaws infested the country and shot up the towns. The history of Billy the Kid, and the Hawking gang, is well known, and the adventures and slaughter of the Spike gang, so called, are yet fresh in the memory of many Tucumcarians.

The first settlement established in this neighborhood was that of Liberty, located four miles north of the present site of Tucumcari. The traces of the few adobe houses which constituted the town are now almost obliterated. The coming of the railroad and the founding of the village of Tucumcari rapidly caused its decay.

The railroad soon changed the entire aspect of things. Tucumcari is new, so new that the first downtown business rooms are yet occupying the original positions, unchanged in appearance from their primary state of being, although adjoining lots have been covered since by several hundred thousand dollars' worth of modern office and business buildings.

The liveliest and most moral town in New Mexico is now the motto. Instead of the natural vitality, being expended in random pursuits as in former times, it is now turned into the healthier channels of city building, the perfecting of gigantic irrigation schemes, and the acquisition of new railroads and industries. With a chamber of commerce embracing almost all of the business men of the city working hand in hand, with a civic pride second to none and natural resources of the greatest importance, Tucumcari is of necessity moving fast.

A Mean Man.

"Does your husband turn his salary over to you?" "Yes," she sadly replied. "Then why are you so downhearted?" "Oh, it doesn't do any good. He often makes a few dollars extra which he spends for his own pleasure without letting me know about it."

WILL CONTEST THE WILL OF FATHER

New York, N. Y., Dec. 16.—Mrs. J. De Forest Junkin has filed notice that she will contest the will of her father, Herman Schaus, formerly an art dealer of world wide repute, who left an estate valued at more than \$500,000 to



his second wife and left the income of only \$50,000 to Mrs. Junkin. Mrs. Junkin charges, in the papers filed, her stepmother, who is also her aunt, with having induced her father to make a will in her favor, and that she is a society favorite in New York.

For Tourists' Comfort. The French national touring office, a government feature established in Paris, is an effort to facilitate the movement of tourists in that country. All information about places of interest and routes is here available.

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DISFIGURED WITH SCALES AND CRUSTS

Eczema from Top of Head to Waist. Suffered Untold Agony and Pain. Doctors Said It Could Not Be Cured. Set of Cuticura Remedies Successful When All Else Had Failed.

"Some time ago I was taken with eczema from the top of my head to my waist. It began with scales on my body. I suffered untold itching and burning, and could not sleep. I was greatly disfigured with scales and crusts. My ears looked as if they had been most cut off with a razor, and my neck was perfectly raw. I suffered untold agony and pain. I tried two doctors who said I had eczema in its fullest stage, and that it could not be cured. I then tried other remedies to no avail. At last, I tried a set of the genuine Cuticura Remedies, which cured me. Cuticura Remedies cured me of eczema when all else had failed, therefore I cannot praise them too highly.

"I suffered with eczema about ten months, but am now entirely cured, and I believe Cuticura Remedies are the best skin cure there is." (Signed) Miss Mattie J. Shaffer, R. F. D. 1, Box 8, Danby, Mass., Oct. 27, 1910.

"I had suffered from eczema about four years when both legs began to break out on different parts of my body. I started with a fine red rash. My back was affected first, when it also spread over my face. The itching was almost unbearable at times. I tried different ointments and salves, but nothing seemed to help me until I began to use the Cuticura Soap and Ointment. One box of them cured me entirely. I recommended them to my sister for her baby who was troubled with tooth eczema, and they completely cured her baby." (Signed) Mrs. F. L. Marberger, Drexelsville, Pa., Sept. 6, 1910.

Although Cuticura Soap and Ointment are sold by druggists and dealers everywhere, a liberal sample of each, with 30-page booklet on the skin and hair, will be sent, post-free, on application to Pettey Drug & Chem. Corp., Dept. 4B, Boston.

Was Taking No Chances.

"Your case would have been much stronger, Mr. Murphy," said the lawyer whom Mr. Murphy had engaged to defend him, "if you had acted only on the defensive. But you struck first, it seems. If you had let him strike first, you would have had the law on your side." "And what good would it do to have the law on my side," answered Mr. Murphy, "after I was dead? What would I care for the law on me side when Gilligan was on me stomach? It's foolish talk to have!"

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